United Nations S/2018/1174

Security Council

Distr.: General
28 December 2018

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 2423 (2018), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2019 and requested me to report every three months on its implementation, focusing on progress in taking forward the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (see S/2015/364 and S/2015/364/Add.1) and the efforts of MINUSMA to support it. The present report contains updates regarding major developments in Mali since my previous report (S/2018/866).

II. Major political developments

2. Steps were taken by the signatory parties in the implementation of the peace agreement, including the launch of an accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process, and the establishment of 10 district-level interim administrations in the Kidal, Ménaka and Timbuktu regions, including two in Taoudenni. No further progress took place, however, on the operationalization of the interim authorities and on agreement on integration quotas for the land forces. The Pact for Peace signed on 15 October between the Government of Mali and the United Nations committed the Malian parties to pursue and accelerate a more inclusive peace process. With a view to fostering a conducive environment for political and institutional reforms, Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga started consultations with political and societal actors, including the signatory armed movements.

A. Implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

3. The Agreement Monitoring Committee held three regular meetings during the period under review to take stock of progress in the implementation of the Agreement. During the meeting held on 18 September, participants welcomed the appointment of a Minister for Social Cohesion, Peace and National Reconciliation, Lassine Bouaré, whose Ministry was established to coordinate the Government's efforts to implement the Agreement.

4. During the meeting held on 15 October, Lassine Bouaré announced the establishment of a strategic forum and four national technical subcommittees

Please recycle

mirroring the subcommittees of the Agreement Monitoring Committee tasked with the implementation of the Agreement. The Committee will continue to monitor progress in implementation and resolve differences between the parties. At its meeting on 12 November, the Agreement Monitoring Committee endorsed the establishment of a working group on the participation of women in the peace process, under the leadership of MINUSMA.

5. The Pact for Peace, which reaffirms the Government's commitment to the full implementation of the Agreement, was signed in the same meeting by Minister Bouaré and my Special Representative for Mali. The Pact calls for more inclusivity in the peace process and reiterates that the armed groups should gradually disappear to give way to a reconstituted and reformed army. It also provides for international mediation efforts to make binding decisions in case of divergences between the parties, in conformity with article 52 of the Agreement. The signatory armed groups stated their full adherence to the Pact through an annex signed on the same day and agreed to launch the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process of the Operational Coordination Mechanism elements in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu on 6 November.

6. During the same meeting, the representative of the independent observer presented the outline of its second report, covering the period from May to September, which was issued on 29 October. It focuses on progress and challenges impacting the implementation of the 22 March roadmap, including the situation in central Mali and criminal economic activities.

7. During its meeting on 21 November, the Agreement Monitoring Committee took note of the limited progress achieved in the implementation of the peace agreement, finding that despite the start of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process, there was no progress on the operationalization of the interim authorities. The signatory movements, in particular the Platform coalition of armed groups, expressed concern about the Government's initiative to carry out an administrative and territorial restructuring and indicated that they may boycott the process.

Political and institutional measures

8. In the period under review, the percentage of civil administrators present at their duty stations in northern and central Mali slightly increased compared to the previous reporting period, from 31 to 34 per cent. The governors of Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal and Ménaka were present in their respective localities, while the governor of Taoudenni continued to operate from Timbuktu because the necessary infrastructure, notably office accommodation and residential facility, were not yet in place. Out of the 72 civil administrators appointed in June, seven administrators including three prefects and four sub-prefects were deployed to their duty stations in Kidal and Gao. Since my previous report, there was a slight increase in the percentage of appointed judicial and prison officials deployed in northern and central Mali, although insecurity continued to cause absenteeism and the relocation of some staff.

9. Ten district-level interim administrations were installed in the regions of Timbuktu, Ménaka and Kidal, while two district-level interim administrations for Taoudenni were deployed to Timbuktu. The Government allocated an additional $6 million to enable regional-level interim authorities to fund projects identified in their priority action plans, including the completion of a water supply system in Kidal city, the construction of six schools and six water points in the Ménaka region, and the establishment of three camel meat and milk processing factories in the Taoudenni region.

10. Discussions on the territorial and administrative restructuring reform dominated the national political debate throughout the reporting period. On 13 October, a document presented as a draft law on administrative and territorial restructuring was circulated on social media, sparking a tense debate among political actors and civil society groups and some demonstrations in the northern and central regions. There were concerns that certain communities could be disadvantaged on the basis of ethnic and geographical lines. The document aimed to increase the number of regions from 11 to 21; the number of districts from 49 to 101 and the number of municipalities from 703 to 789. To alleviate concerns and consult populations, including segments of civil society and signatory movements, the Government held regional consultations on the country's administrative and territorial boundaries and status from 13 to 17 November throughout the country, including in Timbuktu, Ménaka, Kidal and Mopti. Such consultations could not take place in Gao due to strong opposition by civil society and signatory armed groups, who claimed that the proposed restructuring would be detrimental to some segments of the sedentary population of the Gao region and that the consultations lacked inclusivity.

Defence and security measures

11. On 6 November, the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and the Commission on Integration, supported by MINUSMA, launched an ad hoc accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process for combatants of the Operational Coordination Mechanism. The process was conducted simultaneously in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal and targeted 1,600 combatants, out of which a total of 1,423 combatants of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, the Platform coalition of armed groups and other armed groups were registered. The process, which took place from 6 to 30 November, allowed the integration of combatants of the signatory movements into the national army. The three newly constituted mixed units will be administered by the Malian army and tasked with providing security for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, under the command and control of the Technical Commission on Security. In parallel, some personnel will be selected from these units to create special units to fight terrorism. MINUSMA continued to work with all stakeholders to help them reach an agreement to move forward the integration of armed group elements in the Malian armed forces.

B. Other political developments

12. An agreement was reached to postpone the holding of legislative elections, initially scheduled to take place in the last quarter of 2018. On 12 October, the Constitutional Court ruled that the term of members of Parliament could be extended, provided an organic law be adopted to that end. On 24 October, the Council of Ministers approved a bill extending the term of members of Parliament until 30 June 2019, which was then adopted by the National Assembly on 22 November. The Council of Ministers also approved a draft decree repealing the dates of the legislative elections. Parliament adopted a bill extending the state of emergency, which has been in place since 20 November 2015, until 31 October 2019.

13. Although most stakeholders, including opposition leader Soumaïla Cissé, were in favour of a postponement of the legislative elections, they denounced what they described as the Government's unilateral approach to crucial political issues. They also demanded to be included in further decision-making processes on political reforms. My Special Representative continued to use his good offices and met with Malian stakeholders, including President Keita, the Prime Minister and opposition leader Soumaïla Cissé, to appease tensions and advocate for a constructive political

dialogue, in consultation with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States.

14. Preparations began on holding legislative elections. MINUSMA provided technical, logistical and advisory support to the Government for the annual update of the voters' registry, including through the deployment of materials and staff to the northern regions and Mopti and through support to strategic communications and awareness-raising activities.

15. Members of the political opposition, including Soumaïla Cissé, established a new political coalition, the Front pour la sauvegarde de la démocratie, which includes some 30 political parties, former presidential candidates and leaders of trade unions, and aims, inter alia, to improve electoral transparency, enhance inclusive governance systems and protect the freedom of the press.

16. On 5 November, magistrates' unions ended a three-month strike over wages and security conditions in the exercise of their duties. This followed an agreement with the Government to deploy an additional 310 security personnel to various jurisdictions and to address concerns related to the salaries of all civil servants as part of a consultation forum to be held in Bamako in mid-January 2019. The Prime Minister also proposed a framework law be developed to address the working conditions of magistrates. MINUSMA continued to support improved security for the justice system, including via a project through the trust fund for peace and security in Mali for the installation of security systems at the court and magistrates' accommodations in the Timbuktu region.

C. Support to Malian defence and security forces

17. Within the framework of the memorandum of understanding between MINUSMA and the Government related to the mutual support between MINUSMA and the Malian armed forces, the Mission provided support for three casualty and medical evacuations, shared information and coordinated patrols.

18. MINUSMA, jointly with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Union capacity-building mission in Mali, continued to provide technical assistance to the Malian specialized judicial unit tasked with anti-terrorism and transnational organized crime. The Mission provided logistical and liaison support to the unit for its investigation on attacks against MINUSMA, including in Douentza on 28 February, in Timbuktu on 14 April and in Ber on 27 October 2018. Further, while co-location and mentoring sessions for the Malian specialized investigations brigade continued, mentoring was extended to magistrates for the first time and support was provided to the investigation of 26 criminal cases, including the collection and examination of evidence. Training courses for the Malian specialized judicial unit were also held on terrorism investigations, judicial cooperation and human trafficking. In addition, MINUSMA provided technical assistance to the gendarmerie research brigade in Sévaré and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel in preparation for the exhumation of an alleged terrorist in Boulikessi, in the centre of Mali. From 16 to 17 October, MINUSMA, in collaboration with the Government and a local non-governmental organization, trained 50 civil society representatives, including 25 women, in Bamako on the national policy on countering and preventing violent extremism and terrorism in Mali. These initiatives will contribute to strengthening the capacity of Malian justice authorities to investigate and prosecute individuals suspected of terrorism-related crimes, mass atrocities and transnational organized crime, which threaten to destabilize the peace process.

19. The Mission continued capacity-building activities for Malian defence and security forces. MINUSMA trained 1,067 members of the Malian security forces,

including 115 women, from Bamako, Gao and Timbuktu on various policing modules and on human rights, and 153 Malian national police, including 14 women, as well as 32 civilians, including 12 women, in Bamako, Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu regions on community policing skills. It provided 20 motorcycles to Malian police for a community policing pilot programme in Bamako, to be expanded to other regions in the country. Furthermore, two seminars on community-oriented policing for civil society were held in Bamako. Through inclusive security-planning processes, community policing seeks to reinforce trust between State authorities and the population in conflict-affected areas. In support of the national border policy, on 5 October, the Mission provided the Malian army and forest guard brigades with training and equipment, including ultra-light motorized aerial surveillance aircraft, as part of a community security and counter-poaching project in the Mopti region funded by the trust fund for peace and security in Mali.

D. Regional developments

20. Regional actors continued to support solutions to address the root causes of instability and insecurity in the Sahel, including the Group of Five for the Sahel. On 26 September, at the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, the United Nations hosted a high-level event on Mali and the Sahel, co-chaired by the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Group of Five for the Sahel, the European Union, France and Algeria. At the event, regional and international stakeholders recalled the importance of accelerating the implementation of the Agreement to restore stability in Mali and the Sahel and of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. The Group of Five for the Sahel member States reiterated their commitment to operationalizing the Joint Force as swiftly as possible following the 29 June attack on its headquarters in Sévaré. They stressed that the lack of predictable financing and shortfalls continued to cause delays. Representatives of donor countries reiterated their support to the Joint Force and urged Group of Five for the Sahel member States to accelerate force generation efforts.

21. On 25 October, the Defence and Security Committee of the Group of Five for the Sahel convened its eighth extraordinary session in Niamey. The chiefs of defence staff of the Group of Five for the Sahel member States discussed the practical arrangements for the transfer of the Joint Force headquarters from Sévaré to Bamako so that the Joint Force could achieve full operational capacity as soon as possible. As outlined in my most recent report on the Joint Force (S/2018/1006), troop deployment continued to be slowed by the absence of secure and fortified operating bases, capability and equipment. On 5 and 6 December, the Group of Five for the Sahel convened a donors' coordination conference in Nouakchott with the support of partners, including the United Nations and the European Union. The overall purpose of the conference was to raise 1.9 billion euros (€) to fund the Group's priority investment programme (2019–2021), a portfolio of 40 projects in the areas of infrastructure, governance, resilience and security. The heads of State of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Niger, the Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs of Mali and representatives of several Member States, United Nations entities, regional organizations and international financial institutions attended the conference. Funding pledges amounted to €2.4 billion, exceeding the organizers' initial expectation.

III. Major security developments

22. The security situation remained of grave concern during the period under review and was marked by several complex attacks launched by violent extremist groups in the central and northern regions. The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims claimed responsibility for a number of the attacks against MINUSMA, Malian defence and security forces and international forces across central and northern Mali, particularly in the Timbuktu and Mopti regions. There was also an increase in incidents of intimidation, kidnappings and targeted assassinations of both civilians and signatory armed group members, especially in the centre of the country. Additionally, there was mounting intercommunity violence and clashes in central Mali.

A. Asymmetric and other attacks

23. MINUSMA continued to be targeted by asymmetrical attacks, most significantly in Ber, Timbuktu region, on 27 October. In the complex attack, unidentified assailants opened fire, and launched rocket-propelled grenades. Two vehicles filled with explosives entered the camp, where one of them exploded. The attack resulted in two peacekeepers killed in action and eleven injured. The modus operandi of the attack is indicative of the sustained capability of the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, which immediately claimed responsibility, to carry out complex attacks against international forces, similar to its 14 April attack on the MINUSMA Timbuktu "super camp".

24. On the same day, near Konna town, Mopti district, a MINUSMA patrol was targeted in a complex attack, when a MINUSMA vehicle struck an improvised explosive device or mine, followed by an armed confrontation with an alleged violent extremist group. The attack resulted in the wounding of six peacekeepers.

25. On 12 November, the premises of a MINUSMA contractor dealing with explosive threat mitigation training and explosive detection was attacked with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in Gao city centre. Three civilians were killed and at least 30 wounded, including 12 children and 6 women. In addition, nine contractors were injured by the explosion. The attack was claimed by the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims.

26. On the night of 22 to 23 November, Malian and Barkhane armed forces conducted an operation against the stronghold of Katiba d'Ansar Dine du Macina, resulting in the death of 30 terrorists, including the leader of the group, Hamadoun Kouffa.

27. Overall, 48 incidents involving the use of improvised explosive devices were recorded during the reporting period. The number of improvised explosive device incidents since January 2018 continued to increase, with 192 incidents having occurred, compared to 124 incidents during the same period in 2017.

28. Armed groups reportedly conducted 64 attacks, comprising 35 against Malian defence and security forces, 7 against MINUSMA, 2 against MINUSMA contractors, 16 against signatory armed groups and 1 against Operation Barkhane. The highest number of attacks was carried out in Mopti (24) and Timbuktu (13), followed by Gao (12), Kidal (7), Ménaka (4), Segou (3) and Kaye (1) regions. The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims claimed two asymmetric attacks during the reporting period. Since my most recent report, two peacekeepers were killed and 42 injured, whereas in the previous reporting period no peacekeepers were killed and 11 were injured. Three MINUSMA contractors were killed and nine injured, and 3 civilians

were killed and at least 30 others, including 12 children and six women, were injured, in Gao on 12 November.

29. Malian forces remained heavily targeted by asymmetric attacks, and the number of victims increased: 28 soldiers were killed and 47 injured during the reporting period, compared to 19 killed and 24 injured during the previous period. Attacks against the Malian security and defence forces were most heavily concentrated in Mopti (19), Timbuktu 64, Segou (3), Gao (1) and Kaye (1). Moreover, a series of clashes between signatory armed groups and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara in the Ménaka region resulted in 5 members of the signatory armed groups killed, compared to 40 members killed and 4 injured in attacks during the previous period.

B. Protection of civilians

30. Civilians continued to be affected by targeted attacks and intercommunity clashes involving armed self-defence and violent extremist armed groups in the centre, although the number of incidents decreased this reporting period. There were 109 incidents in the central region, killing 108 civilians, including one child, and injuring 43, including five children and one woman in this reporting period in comparison to 287 killed, including 14 women and 10 children, and 38 injured in the previous period. MINUSMA recorded 43 abductions of civilians. The signing of the Koro peace agreement in August, coupled with the deployment of Malian defence and security forces through the Government's integrated security plan for the centre in Dialloubé, Mopti district, Kouakourou, Djenné district, and Dioungani, Koro district, had a positive impact on the situation on the ground.

31. Some of the deadliest incidents resulting from the violence between suspected extremist elements and a group of *dozos* (traditional hunters) occurred in Ténenkou district, Mopti region, where 19 people were killed and several others injured in three incidents that occurred between 4 and 15 October in the area.

32. The limited presence of State authority in parts of central and northern Mali continued to allow violent extremist elements to expand their influence in those areas. In the Mopti region, violent extremist armed groups have been restricting access to the commune of Togueré Coumbé since mid-October and preventing the population from receiving supplies. Despite a visit by the Prime Minister to the village on 13 October, during which he committed to addressing the situation, violent extremist elements have consolidated their positions in the area and stated that they would have to be dislodged by force. Similarly, in the Gao region, the lack of State presence in many areas remained an obstacle to the establishment of a safer environment for civilians. Notably, on 29 September, suspected violent extremist elements led an incursion from the border with the Niger and killed eight civilians in Amalawlaw village and 12 in its immediate vicinity, possibly as a retaliatory response to counter-terrorist operations led by a coalition of the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés, the Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad and Operation Barkhane along the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso border. The attacks were also reportedly an attempt of forced recruitment of the local population. The relative calm in the Ménaka region during the rainy season came to a halt on 25 September, when alleged Idirfane armed individuals killed 27 Ibogholitane civilians and injured three, two of whom were women, in Inékar district. The number of killings in the Ménaka region almost doubled, from 23 during the previous reporting period to 41, including two children.

33. During the reporting period, improvised explosive devices killed 21 and injured 28 civilians in seven incidents. Two incidents recorded in Mopti region and one in

Ménaka region involved improvised explosive devices detonating when hit by privately owned vehicles.

34. The Prime Minister visited the Mopti region twice. On 2 October, he presided over a regional reconciliation meeting between representatives of the Dogon and Fulani communities. MINUSMA continued to assist the Ministry of Social Cohesion, Peace and National Reconciliation in its efforts to address local conflict through the operationalization of six regional reconciliation teams in the central and northern regions. MINUSMA also continued efforts to support reconciliation and to rebuild social cohesion, including the holding of a peace and reconciliation forum in Djenné town on 26 and 27 September, bringing together 220 participants, 50 of whom were women, including local government authorities, community leaders, religious leaders and members of civil society to discuss the deteriorating security situation. The forum resulted in an agreement by participants to cooperate with State authorities in order to stabilize the area. Furthermore, on 20 November, leaders of the Idourfane and Ibogolitane communities in Mali and the Niger signed an agreement to put an end to a conflict over access to natural resources. The mediation effort brought together leaders of the Fulani community, armed groups and officials from Mali and the Niger.

C. Mine action, weapons and small arms

35. With regard to weapons and ammunition management, efforts to reinforce the national capacity to secure stocks continued, with the training of 37 Malian defence and security forces as weapons and ammunition storekeepers or depot managers. MINUSMA also trained 27 Malian engineers in search activities and 9 Malian defence and security forces personnel in advanced explosive ordnance or improvised explosive device disposal, to enhance the capacity of Malian authorities to mitigate explosive hazards. An additional 12 personnel were trained as instructors in improvised explosive device threat awareness.

IV. Human rights situation

36. During the period under review, the human rights situation remained of serious concern, particularly in the centre, as well as along the border of the Timbuktu, Gao and Ménaka regions, where serious human rights violations and abuses continued to be reported. MINUSMA documented 90 cases of serious human rights violations and abuses involving at least 163 victims, including 12 women and 18 children, compared to the 129 cases and 518 victims reported during the previous period. These included 30 cases of extrajudicial execution or arbitrary killings, five cases of torture and ill-treatment and nine cases of unlawful detention. Self-defence armed groups were responsible for 34 per cent of these human rights violations and/or abuses. The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims and other similar groups were responsible for 28 per cent such violations and/or abuses, self-defence armed groups 14 per cent, signatory armed groups 14 per cent, Malian defence and security forces 14 per cent, non-signatory armed groups and the Malian State authorities 4 per cent each, and the Operational Coordination Mechanism and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel one per cent each. A total of 57 per cent of human rights violations and abuses occurred in the Mopti and Ségou regions, 19 per cent in Timbuktu, 9 per cent in Gao, 6 per cent in Ménaka, 4 per cent in the Kayes region, 3 per cent in Bamako, and 1 per cent in the Kidal and Koulikoro regions, respectively.

37. One case of human rights violations attributable to Malian members of the Joint Force was documented. On 20 October in Boulikessi, near the border with Burkina Faso, unidentified armed men attacked a Malian armed forces vehicle carrying

members of the Malian contingent of the Joint Force, killing one soldier and wounding several others. In response, Malian armed forces detained a group of 15 individuals suspected of being associated with the attack. One individual died in custody, and the remaining 14 individuals were subjected to ill treatment and torture during their detention by the Malian armed forces. The authorities have opened internal investigations on these allegations of human rights violations.

38. MINUSMA continued to support efforts of the Government in the fight against impunity. Progress was registered in the prosecution of extrajudicial executions of civilians by the Malian defence and security forces between February and June 2018 in Sokolo, Ségou region, Boulikessi and Nantaka villages, Mopti region, including the suspension of the Malian defence and security members reportedly involved in the human rights crimes, pending the finalization of the criminal investigations.

39. During the reporting period, 887 individuals testified before the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. So far, the Commission has received a total of 10,247 depositions since 3 January 2017. In my letter of 23 January 2018 (S/2018/57), I informed the Security Council of the establishment of the International Commission of Inquiry, which visited Mali from 28 October to 2 November. The three commissioners officially launched the work of the Commission through introductory meetings with representatives of the Government, signatory armed groups, victims' associations, the international community, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations.

40. MINUSMA delivered training courses on human rights for 620 members of the Malian defence and security forces, 244 members of civil society and 147 members of the signatory armed groups of the Operational Coordination Mechanism mixed units.

41. The country task force on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict reported 67 grave violations against children: 11 children killed and 12 maimed in the Timbuktu, Gao and Mopti regions, 42 children separated from armed groups in the Gao and Kidal regions who are following a reintegration programme, one case of military occupation of a school in Timbuktu and one case of denial of humanitarian access.

42. From 5 to 30 November, the Government, with the support of MINUSMA and the United Nations Children's Fund, conducted child screening of combatants during the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process. No children were identified. Activities to raise awareness on the six grave violations took place for 1,144 combatants in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu.

43. During the reporting period, there were reports of one substantiated and two alleged cases of conflict-related sexual violence committed by unidentified armed elements in Goundam district, Timbuktu region. In order to ensure a preventive approach and improved responses to conflict-related sexual violence, MINUSMA provided training to 40 Malian police officers, including 22 women, and 40 members of civil society organizations, both female and male leaders, on receiving and referring sexual violence survivors.

V. Humanitarian situation

44. The humanitarian situation remained precarious, owing to intensified armed conflict, crime and severe flooding. The 2019 humanitarian response plan estimated that these factors would affect 7.2 million people in 2019, with 3.2 million people requiring assistance compared to 4.1 million at the beginning of 2018. The plan will target the 2.3 million people most in need of humanitarian assistance. Initial planning

forecasts for 2019 decreased by 26 per cent year-on-year owing to a bumper harvest and a decrease in the number of people at risk of food insecurity. Nevertheless, the lean season of 2019 may see this figure rise to 3.4 million people. As at 3 December, 52.4 per cent of the required $329.6 million for the 2018 revised humanitarian response plan had been provided. Donors also provided $72 million in humanitarian funding outside of the plan.

45. As of December 2018, humanitarian actors had been the target of 194 security incidents, representing an increase compared to 133 incidents in all of 2017 and 63 in 2016. Insecurity and the presence of explosive devices along roads constrained humanitarian access in the northern and central regions.

46. As of December, there were 716 schools closed, as opposed to 735 in May. These closures were caused primarily by violent conflict and crime. This affected an estimated 213,800 children in the northern and central regions. About 60 per cent of the schools closed were located in the Mopti region.

47. During the reporting period, humanitarian partners provided emergency food assistance to over one million vulnerable persons in the central and northern regions.

48. Floods continued in September and, from May to September, affected 70,000 people and killed 15. This is a dramatic increase from 2017, when floods affected 11,000 people. Malian authorities and humanitarian partners assisted the most vulnerable, including through cash assistance and water, sanitation and hygiene kits.

49. As at 30 September, the Government, supported by the United Nations, registered 80,000 internally displaced people and 526,505 returning internally displaced people. It counted 68,978 refugees who had returned to Mali and 140,276 others who remained abroad. Currently, Mali hosts more than 24,418 refugees and 737 asylum seekers.

VI. Economic development

50. On 19 September, the Council of Ministers adopted the 2019 draft budget, allocating resources to the implementation of the peace agreement, reform of the armed forces and security, the operationalization of the new regions and the improvement of working conditions of state employees, among others. At the International Conference for the Economic Recovery and Development of Mali, held in 2015 in Paris, donors had pledged to provide $4.24 billion: $1.24 billion was disbursed in 2015; $0.81 billion in 2016; and $1.05 billion in 2017. The disbursement rate was estimated to reach 90 per cent in 2018. Of these funds, 40 per cent were earmarked for the north, to supplement the Malian Government's budget to implement the peace agreement. In October, the International Monetary Fund forecasted a decline in the 2018 growth rate from 5 per cent to 4.9 per cent.

51. MINUSMA, through its existing trust fund for peace and security in Mali, assigned approximately $3 million in support of the Malian defence and security forces, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the prevention and mediation of inter-community conflict projects. During the reporting period, the Peacebuilding Fund approved one new national project and two cross-border projects, for a total budget of $4.5 million. The national project focuses on the prevention of conflicts between herders and pastoralists and inclusive management of natural resources in Timbuktu and Mopti. A new cross-border project between Mali and the Niger focuses on establishing avenues for cross-border dialogue to end community conflicts that are aggravated by the actions of extremist groups. The project will further address the mistrust between local communities, the defence and security forces and the penal system. The cross-border project between Mali and Burkina Faso

supports the efforts of the Governments in the framework of the integrated strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations support plan and the priorities on cross-border programming and the empowerment of women and youth. The project engages youth as peacebuilders and development leaders through a participatory process. The project proposes to: strengthen state and non-state mechanisms and structures for conflict prevention and management; increase the participation of young people in local decision-making mechanisms and structures, with bridges to the regional and national levels; and facilitate dialogue and the sharing of experiences and good practices in promoting the civic participation of young people. These goals are promoted through a cross-border and regional approach.

VII. United Nations strategic frameworks and integration plans

52. Efforts were made by MINUSMA and the United Nations country team to strengthen strategic and operational collaboration to promote integration, including through the development of an integrated strategic framework. The framework, expected to be endorsed early next year, will set out the overall United Nations vision, joint objectives and an internal division of tasks. It is also expected to set out a gradual transition process based on the institutional capacities of the Malian Government, the capacity of the United Nations country team and improved access to conflict-affected regions for the development partners.

53. A road map containing the guiding principles for the development of the integrated strategic framework was finalized. Five thematic groups were established, focusing on the extension of state authority and related services; initiatives related to the rule of law and security; reconciliation, conflict prevention and social cohesion; support to elections; and human rights and the protection of civilians. The development of the integrated strategic framework was also discussed during a visit by my Assistant Secretaries-General for Peacekeeping Operations and for Peacebuilding Support to Mali in December.

54. MINUSMA has taken steps to adapt its footprint, as per resolution 2423 (2018). In particular, it has begun deploying additional civilian personnel to Mopti and Ménaka, while efforts are under way to generate the eleventh formed police unit, which MINUSMA intends to deploy to Sévaré, Mopti region, in early 2019 in support of the protection of civilians in the central region. In addition, as part of a United Nations-wide engagement in the centre, and in support of Malian efforts, the Mission has developed an integrated strategy for the centre, based on five pillars: political engagement; security and stabilization; mediation, social cohesion and reconciliation; human rights and protection; and strategic partnerships and communications.

VIII. Capacities of the Mission

A. Military

55. As at 13 December, 12,144 military personnel, including 40 military observers, 451 staff officers and 11,653 contingent personnel, were deployed out of an authorized 13,289 personnel, including 40 military observers, 486 staff officers and 12,763 contingent personnel. Women accounted for 3.06 per cent of military personnel.

56. From September to December 2018, 10 major operations were planned, across Mali, of company-to-battalion-sized elements, from 3 to 10 weeks in duration. These missions included reconnaissance operations and support missions for the movement of personnel and convoy security.

57. The lack of military medium-utility helicopters and contingent-owned armoured personnel carriers, including mine-protected vehicles, which remained a critical shortfall in terms of equipment, continued to limit the operational reach of MINUSMA in patrolling and providing escorts, especially in Sector North, thereby impeding mandate implementation. Key capabilities of the Force are expected to increase through the deployment between December 2018 and February 2019 of a special forces company in Timbuktu, a third company (mechanized) of the quick reaction force in Mopti, an attack helicopter unit with three helicopters in Gao, two additional combat convoy companies in Gao and Mopti, respectively, and a C-130 tactical aviation unit in Bamako.

B. Police

58. As at 30 October, 1,770 police personnel, including 324 individual police officers, of whom 16.05 per cent were women, and 1,446 formed police unit personnel, of whom 9.75 per cent were women, were deployed out of an authorized 1,920 police personnel comprising 345 individual police officers and 1,575 formed police unit personnel. While the deployment of an additional formed police unit is under way, the lack of six armoured personnel carriers for deployed formed police units remained a critical shortfall, which continued to limit the mobility of the units. MINUSMA police also require the generation of 21 individual police officers with specialized expertise, including in the fields of forensics, investigations, community-oriented policing, security sector reform, counter-terrorism, serious organized crime and drug trafficking. The expertise is essential to support the Government in addressing destabilizing crimes that are fuelling and prolonging conflicts and violence.

C. Civilian personnel

59. As at 3 December, 85 per cent of all MINUSMA civilian staff had been deployed, including 89 per cent of international staff, 73 per cent of United Nations Volunteers and 83 per cent of national staff. Women held 26 per cent of the international posts, 32 per cent of United Nations Volunteer positions and 19 per cent of national staff posts.

D. Camp construction and securing supply routes

60. The main MINUSMA supply routes to the Mission's main hubs of Bamako and Gao run through either Dakar, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, or Cotonou, Benin, to ensure delivery of goods in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

61. The Mission is currently engaged in 102 construction priority projects, which are 87 per cent complete. Ongoing projects relate to overhead protected sleeping accommodations, for which material procurement is currently under way. Other projects include an apron extension and maintenance hangar in Mopti, two hangars in Gao and another hangar in Timbuktu. The Mission will also contribute to the construction of the Kidal airstrip project, which is led by an international partner. Various security enhancement projects such as entrances, sidewall blast protection and bunkers are under way in Ménaka, Gao, Tessalit, Timbuktu, Mopti and Douentza.

E. Environment

62. On 18 October, MINUSMA completed studies to upgrade the Government's water purification facilities in Bamako and Timbuktu, which will enable them to treat additional volumes received by MINUSMA. The Mission plans on using the upgraded facilities beginning in April 2019 in Bamako and Timbuktu. On 5 November, the installation of wastewater treatment plants was completed in Mopti, Bamako, Douentza, Tessalit and Ménaka. The inspection of camps and contractor sites was conducted in the Bamako, Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao regions to ensure compliance with environmental standards. Landscaping contracts, which include tree planting, were launched as part of the "Greening the camps" initiative and to contribute to carbon sequestration.

IX. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

63. United Nations personnel continued to face threats related to armed conflict and criminality, mainly in the central and northern regions, as well as terrorism-related threats across the country. In the light of the local conflict dynamics and the expansion of violent extremist armed groups' activity in the northern and central regions of Mali, the design of security arrangements and risk mitigation measures remained challenging. In this context, road travel for United Nations personnel, including those involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, remained dangerous.

64. The terrorist attack perpetrated on 12 November against the premises of a MINUSMA contractor reaffirmed the intent of the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims to undermine the conduct of United Nations operations. The attack also represented a significant escalation in violence, while suggesting a shift in the tactics used by the group, as it ignored the risk of mass casualties among the local community.

65. The complex attack launched against the MINUSMA camp in Ber also underlined the importance of current efforts to mainstream surveillance, intelligence and monitoring measures. MINUSMA focused on strengthening command and control and communication arrangements, including by integrating closed-circuit television and public-address systems inside base defence operations centres and establishing joint defence camps procedures that associate all United Nations security actors. Base defence operations centres were completed in Kidal, Gao, Timbuktu and Mopti.

66. As part of its efforts to enhance the safety and security of its personnel, the Mission scaled up its early warning and surveillance capacity and related technological capabilities, including the installation of ground radars, counter-rocket artillery and mortar systems, and long-, medium- and short-range electro-optical system with night and day capacities. It also revised standard operating procedures for casualty evacuation, incorporating best practices and lessons learned, while decentralizing the approval procedures for evacuations during pre-planned military operations. Further, on 4 October, MINUSMA established a commercial contract with a private hospital in Niamey for the provision of level two-plus medical services in support of Kidal and Gao, where only level-two facilities exist, with Ménaka supported through Gao.

X. Conduct and discipline

67. During the reporting period, no allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded by MINUSMA. The Mission continued to deliver on the three-pronged strategy to address sexual exploitation and abuse with, in terms of prevention, 55 training sessions providing 2,000 personnel with training on standards of conduct expected from all United Nations personnel and the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

XI. Observations

68. Further steps were taken by the Government of Mali and the Platform coalition of armed groups and Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad to deliver on their remaining obligations under the Agreement. I commend President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita for his leadership and the Government of Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga for its continued mobilization in support of the Agreement, including through the creation of a dedicated Ministry for Social Cohesion, Peace and National Reconciliation tasked with coordinating the implementation of the Agreement. I was encouraged by the establishment of district-level interim administrations in northern Mali and the launch of an accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process. However, establishing lasting peace and stability will require the full and expeditious delivery of all the obligations in the Agreement, including inclusive and sustainable development. I therefore call on all parties to redouble their efforts and take further immediate and concrete action to implement key provisions of the Agreement referenced in the 22 March road map without delay to produce tangible improvements in security conditions and the implementation of sustainable development, including access to basic social services.

69. The full and timely implementation of the Agreement will require inclusive support across Malian society. I therefore welcome the emphasis of the signatory parties on an inclusive process when they endorsed the Pact for Peace signed by MINUSMA and the Government. I urge all stakeholders, including from the political opposition, to join the Government in its efforts to move forward on critical political and institutional reforms necessary for improved governance and sustaining peace. The meaningful inclusion and participation of individuals, especially women and youth, remains essential to deliver lasting results and to secure the progress made over the past years.

70. I take note of the agreement to postpone the legislative elections until next year. I call on all parties to the peace process to use this time to strengthen the transparency and credibility of the electoral process and increase participation, notably of the youth. MINUSMA and the United Nations Development Programme, through the integrated electoral team, will continue to assist national partners with the preparations of the polls.

71. The launch of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process in the Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu regions is an encouraging step towards the building of a reconstituted and reformed Malian army. I call on the signatory parties to reach an agreement, without further delay, on conditions for the integration of armed group members in the Malian armed forces. These reconstituted and reformed armed forces should, over time, play a pivotal role in enhancing security across the country.

72. I remain seriously concerned about the security situation in Mali, particularly in the centre. The situation must be urgently addressed through a more integrated and comprehensive approach to avoid further deterioration. I call on the Government to

step up its efforts to address the root causes of conflict and security challenges in affected areas. Efforts are under way to scale up the presence of the United Nations in the centre, with an emphasis on reconciliation and local mediation efforts, in support of the Government's multifaceted stabilization programme.

73. I welcome the development of an integrated strategic framework, an essential tool to strengthen cooperation and pool the resources of the United Nations system to deliver a more integrated response and efficiently address the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.

74. MINUSMA continues to coordinate its activities with the Malian defence and security forces, the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and Operation Barkhane, within the parameters of their distinct mandates. In this context, MINUSMA will continue to support the Malian defence and security forces, including through technical assistance and training.

75. All national and international military forces operating in Mali must ensure that their operations comply with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. No efforts should be spared to hold perpetrators of human rights violations accountable. Meaningful progress in the fight against impunity remains imperative for reconciliation initiatives to thrive, reconstruct the social fabric, build trust and bring society together, and pave the way for lasting peace. The International Commission of Inquiry will complement Malian efforts to ensure the establishment of credible and functioning justice institutions in order to deliver justice and reconciliation. I urge the Government to intensify efforts to investigate and prosecute other crimes that risk destabilizing the peace process, including terrorism-related offences. I urge Member States to support the provision of police expertise to help to address destabilizing crimes.

76. I am saddened by the loss of life of peacekeepers and the injuries inflicted as a result of continued attacks. I express my heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of the troop-contributing country concerned for the loss of two of its peacekeepers and to the bereaved families of the victims. The Secretariat and the Mission continue to take measures to improve the safety and security of United Nations personnel. I reiterate my call on troop- and police-contributing countries to fulfil their obligations in accordance with the memorandum of understanding signed with the United Nations. It is critical that they equip their contingents with the required armoured personnel carriers, including mine-protected vehicles, to minimize the exposure of personnel to threats and enable the Mission to perform effectively. I further call on Member States to continue to support MINUSMA through the provision of bilateral support to those contributing countries which require support.

77. The deterioration of the humanitarian situation is of great concern. Access to basic services and assistance such as education, health, water and sanitation, as well as shelter remain limited and challenging. Furthermore, intercommunal conflict and organized crime continue to hinder the work of humanitarian actors, including reaching vulnerable and affected people to provide much-needed assistance. My Special Representative, in coordination with the United Nations country team, will continue to engage signatory and other armed groups in dialogue to improve humanitarian access.

78. I urge the Group of Five for the Sahel to step up their efforts to deploy outstanding troops and to fully establish the Joint Force's police component acting within the human rights compliance framework. It will be essential that the Joint Force resume its operations as soon as feasible. MINUSMA stands ready to provide support to the Joint Force within the limits of the funding it has received for this purpose. I call on the international community to support the Joint Force through more predictable and sustainable financial and logistical resources and to provide

MINUSMA with the funds it urgently requires to deliver its mandated support to the Joint Force. I also urge donors who have made pledges not yet earmarked to match them with existing needs and to accelerate the disbursement of the funds pledged. I commend the permanent secretariat and the Member States of the Group of Five for the Sahel on the successful holding of the coordination conference for partners and donors in Nouakchott on 6 December. I welcome the pledges made totalling €2.4 billion to fund the first phase of the Group's priority investment programme covering the period 2019 to 2021. The United Nations will continue to support the Group of Five for the Sahel, including by aligning its support plan for the Sahel with the priorities of the priority investment under the umbrella of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

79. Finally, I wish to commend my Special Representative, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his excellent leadership and express my appreciation to the personnel of the United Nations system in Mali for their tireless efforts in a very challenging environment. I would also like to thank the members of the international mediation, including Algeria, the lead mediator, regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Group of Five for the Sahel, as well as non-governmental organizations and all other partners for their continued support to Mali.

Annex

Map

MINUSMA
Deployment
December 2018
National capital
Regional capital
Town, village
Major airport
International boundary
Regional boundary
Sector line
Main road
Other road
Track
Railroad
0 100 200 300 km
0 100 200 mi
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Map No. 4506 Rev. 26.1 UNITED NATIONS
December 2018 (Colour)
Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)
MAURITANIA
ALGERIA
MALI
NIGER
SENEGAL
GUINEA
GUINEA BISSAU
GAMBIA
BURKINA FASO
GHANA
TOGO
BENIN
NIGERIA
SIERRA LEONE
COTE D'IVOIRE
Sector WEST
Sector EAST
Sector NORTH
Sector SOUTH
Bamako
Ségou
Mopti / Sevare
Gao
Tombouctou
Kidal
Goundam
Ménaka
Gossi
Ansongo
Bourem
Anefis In-Darane
Aguelhok
Tessalit
Bordj Mokhtar
Douentza
Nampala
Niono
Djenné
Koro
Diabali
Koutiala
Sikasso
Kolondiéba
Yanfolila
Bougouni
Kati
Koulikoro
Kita
Kayes
Diéma
Nioro du Sahel
Aourou
Tambacounda
Bafoulabé
Ouagadougou
Ber
Lere
'Ayoûnel 'Atroûs